



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

BEFORE THE INDEPENDENCE INTIFADA:  
SOWING THE SEEDS OF A NATIONAL MOVEMENT  
A HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF LEBANON

by  
ISSAM AYMAN KAYSSI

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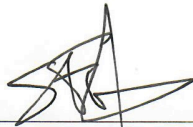
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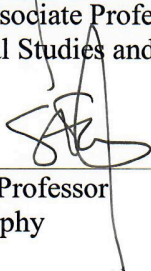
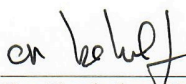
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Issam Ayman Kayssi for Master of Arts  
Major: Middle Eastern Studies

Title: Before the Independence Intifada: Sowing the Seeds of a National Movement – A Historical Timeline of Lebanon

This project is an attempt at exploring the origins of the Lebanese Independence Intifada of 2005. By reviewing the decade before it, it becomes clear that the 2005 moment was not merely a momentous reaction to the brutal assassination of a former Prime Minister. It was a result of efforts towards political organization by Lebanese figures from all denominations, starting with the end of the Civil War in the previous decade, leading up to 2005. The purpose of this project is to begin to write the history, and thus make a claim about the origins of and the foundational years for the Independence Intifada. The product is a user-friendly, interactive historical timeline of the events that led to 2005, starting after the Ta'if Agreement.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The following is a project report on an interactive historical timeline constructed around political events in (and affecting Lebanon) leading up to the Independence Intifada in 2005. The timeline starts in 1989 with the Ta'if Agreement, details the 1990s and early 2000s, leading up to the year 2005. The construction of the timeline was done through the use of Timeline JS, an open-source program designed by the Northwestern University Knight Lab team.

### **A. Introduction**

The Independence Intifada, also commonly referred to as the Cedar Revolution, was a chain of peaceful demonstrations following the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005. Its primary goal was the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon, and the replacement of a Syrian-allegiant Lebanese government with an independent one.

Direct Syrian military intervention in Lebanon first started in 1976 (within the 1975 – 1990 Civil War) upon the request of the predominantly-Christian Lebanese Front to counter the predominantly-Muslim National Movement. The Syrian forces turned against the former group as the war progressed and, by 1990, the Syrian army controlled East Beirut and other Christian areas (in addition to most of the Lebanese territory). The war came to an end in 1990 after the Ta'if Agreement reconfigured the power-sharing formula of Lebanese politics (Salamey, 57). This meant the relocation of (Maronite Christian) presidential powers in favor of Parliament and the Council of

Ministers. Among other important articles, Ta'if called for the gradual withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the disarmament of all Lebanese militias. This would not be achieved, however, until after the Independence Intifada in April 2005. The focus of this project is to look at the post Civil War period leading up to and while retrospectively considering the 2005 moment.

## **B. Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to *begin* to look at the post Civil War period in Lebanon, while knowing some of its conclusions today, namely that the Lebanese Independence Intifada took place in 2005 and the occurrence of what was arguably a 'dream' during the 1990s, namely the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon. Was the 2005 protest movement merely a momentous reaction to the brutal assassination of a former Prime Minister? This project aims to look at the 1990s leading up to 2005 to say otherwise, that it was not born out of thin air; quite the contrary. The project aims to look at the seeds that were distributed, so to speak, throughout the 1990s by Lebanese figures from different groups and religious denominations starting with the end of the war, leading up to 2005. These seeds, this effort was directed towards reestablishing ties between communities that had been separated before this war. The purpose of this project, as a result, is to write the history, and thus make a claim about the origins of and the foundational years for the Independence Intifada. The importance of such an endeavor becomes more obvious considering the times that we currently live in, when this history seems to be largely forgotten or its narratives adjusted. Furthermore, I have not come across a detailed timeline or an in-depth account of these years in my literature search.

As such, I have establish a detailed timeline of the events that led to 2005, starting as early as the Ta'if Agreement in 1989. The timeline gains in momentum and detail in the second half of the decade as it illustrates the types of political organization that was occurring. The timeline will be elaborate and will include the local, political and (some) economic, and international-level events that came together to allow for this moment in Lebanese and Arab history to happen.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

In order to begin to look at the claim that the Independence Intifada can be in an impactful way traced back to the 1990s, or rather that the 1990s were instrumental to the Intifada occurring the way that it did (a series of peaceful demonstrations, at such a large and historic scale), I had to begin with a general literature review outlining key political moments during this time. I have referenced these works at the end of the table. After getting a sense of this 1990—2005 period, I attempted to construct this historical account using sources written at the time of the events being examined, i.e. sources that are not necessarily historically reinterpreted to fit later narratives, relying primarily on the archives of the leading (pro-Independence) Lebanese newspaper an-Nahar. An-Nahar archives served to draw out the timeline of the events. These could be cross-referenced with others in competing newspapers for better accuracy if the project is to be expanded on later on. Primary sources are necessary and have include articles, political manifestos, statements, and founding documents for groups involved in the events. Furthermore, in addition to cross-referencing with other newspapers, if there remains any major gaps or questions left unanswered, then one can resort to oral recounts of the events from identified individuals who took part in them. In order to make the timeline more interactive and user-frinedly, I have also used the Associated Press (AP) video archive.

To outline, the timeline-construction in more detail, I first began with a draft of major events from the literature review. I then proceeded to collect key words to search for using the Annahar Online archive provided by AUB libraries. Since (I discovered)

that this online archive is not always reliable in identifying keywords, it was also necessary to perform 'date searches' whereby I would scan particular days and months of importance for articles relevant to the keywords or events I had an idea existed (from the literature review). As one may imagine about undergoing such a process, one event/keyword search leads to discovery of other events and (sometimes forgotten) details, and so on. The important question to be answered here is about which events were deemed worthy of inclusion and which ones were not, of course. As the process developed, I have found that the common denominator for the worthiness of inclusion of a particular event is its contribution to the formation of the National Opposition that was instrumental to the 2005 movement. In addition to this key 'category', other historical nodes that may directly and immediately contributed to the formation and strengthening of this National Opposition are those that cannot be ignored in a timeline about 1990s Lebanon, e.g. the withdrawal of Israeli Forces from South Lebanon in 2000.

## CHAPTER III

### TIMELINE OVERVIEW

The construction of the timeline was done through the use of Timeline JS, an open-source program designed by the Northwestern University Knight Lab team. At the time of writing an unpublished, unlisted URL for the timeline could be found here:

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=14rIro13U6IUZiLEV0oAHvm8VLlul2bhZkx7SjSTOKyg&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=14rIro13U6IUZiLEV0oAHvm8VLlul2bhZkx7SjSTOKyg&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

Below is an overview of the nodes included in the timeline. It includes some repetitions, according to the spreadsheet to produce the code for the timeline.

Table 1  
*Overview of the Timeline Nodes*

Year	Month	Day	Headline
			Before the Independence Intifada
1989	9	30	Ta'if: 'National Accord' document
1990	10	13	Syrian forces move against Aoun
1994	4	24	Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea arrested
2000	11	22	Student protests against Syrian Army
1990	10	14	Post-Aoun
1991	8	8	Amnesty Law for War Crimes
1991	8	17	Amnesty Law for War Crimes
1989	10	26	Protest in support of Aoun
1991	5	1	Lebanese [and Syrian] Army reclaims territories
1992	5	7	Karami resigns amid economic collapse
1992	10	31	Hariri announces his first government
1992	8	23	First parliamentary election post Ta'if
1993			The Permanent Congress for Lebanese Dialogue'
1994	4	25	Islam and Muslims in a Changing World
1995	11	26	Vatican Synod: Special Assembly for Lebanon
1996	4		Israeli Attack, April Agreement
1996	8	18	Second Parliamentary Election

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1998	1	3	Effects of Second Amnesty Law
1997	5	11	Pope Visits Lebanon
1997	3		Baladi, Baldati, Baladiyyati campaign for municipal elections
1998	10	13	Lahoud is elected president
1998	10	13	Lahoud is elected president
1998	11	24	Lahoud assumes power
1999	5	15	'A Call to Agree on the Meaning of Lebanon'
1997	11		'No Frontiers' formed as a campaign in AUB
2000	5	25	Israel withdraws from South Lebanon
2000	8		Third parliamentary elections
2000	7	30	Amin Gemayel returns
2000	9	20	The Call of the Maronite Church
			Greek Orthodox Patriarch supports the Maronite
2000	10	3	Call
2000	11	3	The Syrian Army question is raised in Parliament
2002	11		Paris II conference**
2001	4	30	Qornat Shahwaan Manifesto
2001	4	30	Qornat Shahwaan Manifesto
2001	5	16	Manbar Democrati calls for Unified Opposition
2001	9	11	9/11 (reference)
2001	8	4	The Mountain Reconciliation
2001	8	7	Anti-Syrian-presence activists beaten and detained
			Patriarch and Joumblatt reaction to August 7,
2001	8	8	2001
2001	8	10	Michel Aoun reaction to August 7, 2001
			A Conference for Defending Liberties and
2001	8	16	Democracy
			Gabriel al-Murr (Opposition) wins Matn By-
2002	6	4	Election
2002	8	5	Joumblatt reiterates support for Qornat Shahwaan
2002	8		MTV Closed Down
2002	9	12	'A Call for Freedom from the South'
2002	9	9	Press Syndicate Freedoms Conference Hijacked
2002	9	5	Press Syndicate meets in wake of MTV shut down
2002	8	16	Qornat Shahwaan condemns media crackdown
			Leftist students back Hikmat Deeb in another by-
2003	9	9	election
2004	6	21	The Beirut Declaration (Manifesto)
2002	5	20	LF prominent activist found murdered
			Campaign of the families of the kidnapped and the
1999	10	29	missing
2004	9	1	Maronite Bishops "Fifth Call"

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2004	9	2	UN Resolution 1559 passes
2004	9	3	Lahoud Extension
2004	10	1	Marwan Hamadeh Assassination Attempt**
2005	2	14	Rafic Hariri Assassination**
2005	2	18	Independence Intifada Annoumenet**
2005	2	28	Karami [Government] Resigns**
2005	3	8	Massive Protest [March 8]**
2005	3	14	Massive Anti-Syria Protest [March 14]**
2005	4	29	Syrian Troops withdraw from Lebanon**

The timeline starts out with the signing of the Ta'if Agreement, which is commonly held as the end of the Lebanese Civil War. In fact, Hafez al-Assad's Syria dominated Lebanon in the 1990s, a decade which began with the Lebanese Parliament passing a law of amnesty that pardoned the crimes of the Civil War (Annahar, 1991a). In May 1991, all militias, with the exception of Hezbollah, were dissolved and the Lebanese army started slowly rebuilding itself (Annahar, 1991b). After the election of a new Parliament in 1992, Saudi-backed billionaire Rafik Hariri was appointed to form a cabinet. Hariri made a priority out of rebuilding infrastructure throughout the country and attempting to revive the economy. It was crucial to begin to lay out the background of the timeline with these events for the timeline to make sense. The Lebanese state was trying to recollect its remains and build itself up, but the Syrian Army was still present in Lebanon, Damascus calling the major shots, and so was the Israeli Army, occupying the South. During this time, attempts at reviving cross-sectarian Lebanese civil society commenced. One such attempt was the formation in 1993 of a "Permanent Council for Lebanese Dialogue" by politicians, journalists, and social activists. The main purpose of this group was a reexamination of the Civil War in order to take lessons away from it (Annahar, 1993).

Hariri was ousted in 1998 after the election of Army commander Emile Lahoud as president. This coincided with the period that Bashar al-Assad, Hafez's son, took charge of the Lebanon dossier (Young, 70). Lahoud was a close ally of the Syrian regime and the rift between Hariri (at this point ousted from government) and Syria began to widen as a result of Hariri's growing power. By 1998, a reemerging civil society had also gained momentum. Wadad Halwani's *Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared* initiated a public campaign under the title "it is our right to know [the fate of those who disappeared during the war]". Paul Ashkar, a social activist, initiated the "Baladi, Baldati, Baladiyati" countrywide campaign to pressure authorities to conduct municipal elections after decades (Annahar, 1997a). Leftist student groups, such as No Frontiers, Tanyos Shaheen, and Pablo Neruda, sprang up in the major universities in the capital Beirut (Barada, 1997). In May 1999, a "Call to Agree on the Meaning of Lebanon", a public declaration, was signed by thirty signatories including politicians, professors, and activists. All of this buildup was leading up the parliamentary elections of 2000.

In May 2000, Israel completed its withdrawal from South Lebanon, ending more than two decades of occupation. The withdrawal denied Syria an important alibi for its continued military presence in Lebanon (Frangié, 111). In August-September 2000, Hariri made a comeback and managed an overwhelming victory in the parliamentary elections, which forced his return to the Prime Minister's office, despite the reluctance of Bashar al-Assad. Furthermore, figures such as Walid Joumblatt, Salah Honein, Nassib Lahoud, Fares Souaid, Nayla Mouawwad, and others were elected, and they were to become the foundation of a national opposition to Syrian presence (Frangié, 107). The Qornet Shahwan Gathering, a meeting of Christian

parliamentarians, politicians, and other activists calling for the withdrawal of the Syrian army, was founded in April 2001 with the blessing of the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir.

In August 2001, the Maronite Patriarch was ready to make a three-day visit to the Shouf Mountains to meet with the Druze leader Walid Joumblatt. The purpose of this visit was the Mountain Reconciliation between the Druze and Maronites after the ejection of Christians from the mountains in 1983. A week later, student protestors affiliated with sidelined Christian parties were beaten and arrested by security forces. Tension between Hariri and Lahoud continued to rise in the early 2000's, and in 2004, Hariri was dismissed as Prime Minister yet again and replaced by an Assad ally, Omar Karami (Salamey, 59). The situation further escalated over Syria's decision to extend President Lahoud's mandate by obliging parliament to vote in favor of a constitutional amendment to that effect. At the same time, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1559 under Chapter 7 calling for a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and the disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. After weeks of growing hostility between Syria and the ever-growing Lebanese opposition, Rafik Hariri was assassinated in a monstrous truck-bomb attack in Beirut. This act finally triggered the beginning of the Independence Intifada in February 2005.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

Each node produced in this timeline could be worthy of a discussion in and of itself as to how it contributed to the 2005 moment, but there are a few, where the archival work seemed to take more time than the others because the event had lasting impact over a period of time and was constantly being referenced, that stand out.

#### **A. Milestones of Note**

##### ***1. On the Municipal Elections Campaign***

Due to it spanning several months, its geographical inclusion (the petition was signed all throughout Lebanon), as well as its ultimate success in restoring municipal elections, this campaign could be studied, in detail, on its own.

##### ***2. On the Mountain Reconciliation***

Considering that the build-up to this historic reconciliation between leaders of communities that violently fought each other for years in the Civil War, that the build-up included the Maronite Church beginning to make clear statements about the continued presence of the Syrian Army in Lebanon, this was no doubt a massive event at the time. Its repercussions were clear to see with the violence exercised in the immediate days after it happened on student activists. The months before and after this event could perhaps be considered for a case study of the repression the security apparatus exercised at the time.

### ***3. On the MTV Shut Down***

The shut down of Gabriel al-Murr's MTV is worthy of study as an event because of how it follows Murr's victory in the by-election, but also because of the pronounced reaction that it gains from various kinds of syndicates throughout Lebanon. It begins to highlight meeting spaces for political activity (and how they can be hijacked, too, as occurred on September 9, 2002).

## **B. Themes of Note**

### ***1. On Meeting Spaces***

One aspect that ties together the events in these timelines is looking at the particular spaces where members of the would-be National Opposition would organize their meetings. What is meant by spaces here are the conference halls where national statements are made, the newspapers or journals in which manifestos and documents are published, the squares where public protests are held, or even which syndicates went on strike for particular causes. This kind of action seems to contrast with the political world fifteen, twenty years later where all of these activities are done virtually.

### ***2. On 'Sulta' and 'Mou'arada'***

Terminology of the time that is worth dissecting is that of 'as-sulta' and 'al-mou'arada', terms in Arabic which roughly translate to those in 'government' and 'opposition'. The reason this is worth mentioning is that Annahar seems to refer to as-sulta as a complex between the Lebanese state (those in government) and Damascus. Whereas in the post-2005 period, after the late former Prime Minister Hariri shifted allegiances away from Syria and was assassinated for it, the focus is more on the Syrian

regime, rather than the Lebanese state apparatus that was facilitating Damascus' meddling in Lebanese affairs.

### ***3. On Student Activism and Student Groups***

A timeline of student activism and grass-roots movements against Syrian presence can be established on its own, and, as such, no justice is done to the organization of groups ranging from what would be considered (Christian) nationalist right-wing (e.g. Lebanese Forces, Free Patriotic Movement, Kataeb 'of the base', etc.) to left-wing groups. The inclusion of the formation of certain leftist student groups stands out in the timeline, and it only makes sense if one highlights the part these groups played in terms of allying themselves with the student branches of other independentist parties at the time (e.g. Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and Walid Joumblatt's Progressive Youth Organization). Another aspect of it is the role these groups played in the formation of political parties in and of themselves, for example the Democratic Left in 2004. More detail to these nodes must be added.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This project offers a starting point for a larger archiving project of the history of 1990s Lebanon leading up to the events in 2005. Where it falls short, at this point, first of all, is that it does not expand on the latter years as much as obviously could be done. This is primarily because of the limited time allocated for the project. Another shortcoming is that it has depended on one source, Annahar, for the archiving work, a newspaper that obviously takes the side of the national opposition to Syrian presence and intervention at the time. In order for it to be a more comprehensive historical timeline, and even if it still were (only) a history of this (particular) National Opposition, other newspapers and other (opposing) sources must be taken into consideration. A third shortcoming is that the timeline does not expand on geopolitical events that are occurring either regionally or internationally, events that have a big effect on the domestic politics of Lebanon.

One cannot escape that this is indeed a highly political timeline that aims to tell the story of a group of political actors that played a major role in organizing one of the largest protest movements in the Arab World, but this is precisely why light should be shed on these events. Finally, I would still hope to expand the commentary on this timeline by one day including a piece on why these events (and *the* event, 2005) are arguably not included in discussions about the Arab World like other events throughout the Arab World that followed (starting 2011) are. Until such issues are addressed, this project provides a good first step for deeper research and discussion about an era in Lebanese history that seems to be left out of the national consciousness today.

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